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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0418
INFO RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0717
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 8428
RUEHNK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 5796
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1679
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 1213
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 6031
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0318

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 000392

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [WI](#) [AG](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER BEDJAOUI ON POLISARIO-MOROCCO
DIRECT TALKS

Classified By: DCM Marc Sievers, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) During a March 5 meeting with Ambassador and DCM covering a range of issues, Foreign Minister Bedjaoui raised the Western Sahara, asking Ambassador for U.S. views about Morocco's anticipated autonomy proposal. Ambassador noted that the U.S. has been encouraging Morocco to develop its ideas on autonomy and to move forward with presenting its plan as a basis for negotiations. Ambassador commented that since independence was anathema to Morocco and the Polisario

rejected integration, autonomy represented the only potential common ground.

POLISARIO "TIRED," MAY BE READY TO
NEGOTIATE DIRECTLY

¶2. (C) Bedjaoui observed that twenty years ago, the U.S. had floated the idea of Western Sahara autonomy based on the model of Puerto Rico. King Hassan II, he said, had shown interest, but insisted on preserving the "external trappings" of Moroccan sovereignty such as the flag, stamps, and currency, and the idea had died. Bedjaoui stressed that Morocco needed to talk directly to the Polisario. The Polisario leadership was "tired" and may be ready to discuss a serious Moroccan offer. Bedjaoui asked why Morocco appeared focused on taking its autonomy plan to the Security Council, when what was needed was direct talks with Polisario.

SENDING MOROCCAN SECRET EMISSARIES?

¶3. (C) Ambassador said the U.S. was encouraging Morocco to engage the Polisario directly. Bedjaoui said there were no bilateral problems between Morocco and Algeria other than how to find a solution to the Western Sahara. Returning to the historical record, Bedjaoui recalled that toward the end of the Algerian independence war, De Gaulle had sent secret emissaries to negotiate with the Algerians while publicly maintaining a tough posture. Morocco, he suggested, could do the same with the Polisario. Such talks could be held out of the spotlight in Geneva, New York, or elsewhere.

COMMENT

¶4. (C) We were struck by Bedjaoui's description of the Polisario leadership as "tired" and interested in engaging

Morocco directly, a comment that the Algerians have not made quite so bluntly before. While Algeria will continue to insist it is not a direct party to the conflict and to reject the idea of negotiating with Morocco on the Sahrawis' behalf, Algeria is signalling its readiness to play a constructive supporting role once Morocco and the Polisario engage.

ERDMAN